

# Up Front



've written and talked to you all about a wide variety of topics in the past year and a half. I have asked much of you and have always been rewarded with high quality professionalism and a job well done. This message will be a little different.

#### Peace And Goodwill To You And Yours!

This message I would like you to step outside of the office with me for just a bit. Because today, from right here where I am, what I feel like telling you is that I want you to go home and enjoy your time with your families this Holiday.

I know you've worked hard. Your efforts have paid off. I see it everywhere I go. Your customer service ethic, your professionalism and good will are valued and appreciated by your customers and the communities they live in. So take pride in your work. For one more year we can say, "Mission Accomplished."

Yes, there are challenges and we all know that. To meet them, we have

on our side unfettered optimism and confidence. I told you at the All Employees Meeting that We are what You are. We are our collective enthusiasm and integrity. Whatever the obstacles are, we will rise above the din and make things work.

But that can wait until the first of the year. Take time for yourselves at this special time of year. You know, in the end all that really matters is you, your family, our NRCS family...

Let's take care of each other with the dignity and respect befitting us all

In closing, I want to send you and yours—every one of you—warm wishes for the best of Holidays.

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Photos courtesy of Dave Smith & Anita Brown | Design: Jim Cairns

#### CALIFORNIA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STAFF

Editor; Design & Layout: Jim Cairns | Editorial Supervision: Anita Brown Contributors: Dave Sanden (Pg. 4), Jeff Raifsnider (Pg. 5), Brian Ziegler (Pg. 6), Paul Laustsen (Pg. 7), Anita Brown, David Rose, Dave Smith, Tanya Robles, Jim Kjelgaard, Livermore Local Partnership Office Staff, Kathy Wold & Jim Cairns

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#### Send Questions, Comments & Contributions to:

California Current Developments, NRCS Public Affairs 430 G Street, #4164, Davis, CA 95616-5475
E-mail: jim.cairns@ca.usda.gov; Phone: (530) 792-5693
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### Sampling Soils In California's National Parks

It's dirty work, but somebody's got to do it!

**By Anita Brown**Public Affairs Director/Davis

n NRCS, using soils information to inform conservation decisions is almost instinctual. Anything from planning for good drainage to restoring a streambank leads us to ask: What are the soil types in the area?

It is interesting then, that some of our Nation's most beautiful and unique parcels of real estate, our National Parks, have never had soil surveys. But that is changing.

"We are about midway through a decade of intense effort by the National Park Service to have soil surveys on all of the national parks in California," says **Dave Smith**, California State Soil Scientist. "While there has been a tendency by some

to want to lock the Parks up in a preserved state, realistically the Park Service has realized they need to manage for the impacts that millions of visitors bring with them. Soil surveys will help them do so."

One example Smith gives is in Redwoods National Park, where the soil survey field work has recently been completed. The park was formerly intensively timbered and spotting and treating areas prone to high erosion required a good working knowledge of the soils in the Park.

As the Congressionally-designated leader of the National Cooperative Soil Survey, NRCS sets standards and procedures for all soil surveys whether on public or private land. NPS reimburses NRCS for the work done on Park land.

So far, field work has been completed on the national parks, recreation areas and monuments of the Channel Islands,



Dave Smith (right), State Soil Scientist and MLRA Team Leader (MO-2), makes a point during a discussion on a field trip at Joshua Tree National Park in Southern California in November. *Photo: Anita Brown* 

Pinnacles, Redwoods, Santa Monica Mountains, and Yosemite.

Work is beginning on Joshua Tree and Lassen. The remaining parks (pending staff and funding) include the Mojave Preserve, Death Valley and Sequoia Kings Canyon.

**Conservation Around the Globe:** Area 1 Resource Conservationist Dave Rose, who is temporarily in the future (it's tomorrow there) and serving as Acting Assistant Director-Operations in the Pacific Islands Area, provides this update on our ongoing work farther west (or is it east?).



America's day begins on Guam! Hawaii and the Pacific Basin Area have been merged. This is a long way from typical farming on the mainland!



Jocelyn Bamba, Guam DC, and local farmer Bernard Watson. *Photos courtesy of Dave Rose*.

### Pacific Island Area Update

By David F. Rose

Currently on detail to the Pacific Basin

uam is the center of the western portion of the newly established Pacific Islands Area. The approval of the reorganization of the Hawaii and the Pacific Basin Area operations into the new PACIFIC ISLANDS AREA, was signed January 6, 2006. As a result, the Pacific Islands Area is organized into western and eastern areas.

The eastern area consists of the state of Hawaii and the territory of American Samoa. The western area consists of the territory of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the independent countries of Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

NRCS maintains field offices on Guam, the CNMI, Palau, and the FSM. At this time there is not a cooperative agreement in place for an office in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Current work arrangements allow for traditional Farm Bill programs to be available on Guam and the CNMI.

However, due to their independent country status, NRCS currently only offers technical assistance in Palau and the FSM. There is also a RC&D office on Saipan providing assistance to the Marianas RC&D Council.

On Guam, typical Farm Bill programs are available, though the scale is not what most NRCS employees may be used to. **Bernard Watson** has worked with the Guam Field Office for several years. His conservation plan includes such practices as; cover crop, windbreaks, irrigation water management, mulching, nutrient management, and pest management.

He has one of the larger operations on Guam, producing a variety of crops, including; Bananas, Bitter melon, Sweet sop, and Tomatoes (both large and cherry varieties). All this productivity is carried out originally on 20 acres, only recently expanded to 30 acres. Despite the seemingly small size, conservation of the natural resource base is essential to Mr. Watson. "This is my livelihood," said Mr. Watson.

Many of the practices he employs on his farm have involved EQIP over the years. His success allowed him to be awarded one of the first CSP contracts in 2006.

#### Mission Accomplished: Kids Learn By Doing

In their October community meeting, the Canyon 4-H members of Shasta County voted to take on an erosion control project as a community service opportunity. They then partnered with NRCS in Redding to implement an erosion control practice around a newly reconstructed (EQIP funded) pond at a ranch in Happy Valley.

The project began on Oct. 17, progressing at a rapid pace until completion the following day. Members hand seeded 50 pounds of erosion-control seed mix around the pond and 15 pounds of California native grass seed on the habitat islands in the pond. They also hand spread 400 pounds of fertilizer and mulched all the planted areas with straw.

"Teams of kids worked together to seed and fertilize a plot, said Soil Conservation Technician **Christy Watson**. "By the end of Day 1, we had all the bales spread out and several areas fertilized. One team finished seeding, fertilizing and mulching their area the first day."

Ten youth returned to finish the job on the following day. Working in two teams, they finished fertilizing and seeding the remaining areas.

Then a large straw blower was used to get the straw on to the seeded areas. The crews finished in record time, and all equipment was picked up and cleared from the field.

"Canyon 4-H members did an excellent job at the site and put a lot of hard work into the project," said Watson. "They hope to go back after the rains to see the seed and fertilizer in action. They also hope to help out with tree and shrub planting that will happen once the rains come for the winter."



The crew of 12 youth and 3 adults started by learning about erosion and why it is important to prevent it. They had a quick lesson on how to use hand spreaders and then made their way out to the ranch and started moving 90 bales of rice straw around the 2 acres surrounding the pond.



Wheelbarrows, dollies, a flatbed truck and 4-wheeler and shoulders were all used to get the job done in less than three hours.

Bales were placed approximately 15 feet apart in all areas needing mulching. Plots were marked off to divide the 2 acres into 8 sections for planting and fertilizing.



One team worked with the blowers moving straw over to the blower so it could be shot out the cannon onto an area. Another team went around and cut all the twine off the bales and then started hand spreading straw onto the areas difficult to reach with the blower.

#### NRCS Receives Innovators Award For IPM



An award winning team: From left to right, Robert Vlach, Dan Wright, Dan Taverner, Mary-Ann Warmerdam (California DPR Director), Hue Dang, Dave Rose, and Linden Brooks. Not pictured: Tim Garcia and Ernie Paschke (retired).

RCS offices in Oroville, Willows, and Yuba City were honored by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) at an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Innovator Award Ceremony in Sacramento on Oct. 26.

The three offices received an award for their pioneering role in developing and promoting methods for pest control that reduce the risks associated with using traditional chemical pesticides.

"My commendations go to our three district conservationists and their staff," said NRCS State Conservationist **Lincoln E. Burton**. "They have done an outstanding job in working with growers, their conservation districts, and pest advisors to really get out in front on pest management in California."

In Butte, Yuba, Sutter, and Glenn counties NRCS has focused on IPM for several years, providing technical and financial support for comprehensive IPM systems including Pest Control Advisor (PCA) monitoring and advisory services, non-pesticide control tactics (e.g. pheromone disruption, releasing beneficial insects), efficient sprayers, reduced-risk pesticides, and WIN-PST, a pesticide screening tool to assess environmental risk. In Butte County, IPM is the backbone of Integrated Orchard Management plans that receive a large proportion of EQIP and CSP funding.





#### Arroyo De La Laguna Project Celebration & Tour Held In Alameda County

#### By Livermore Local Partnership Office

he seven agency, Arroyo de la Laguna Streambank Restoration Demonstration Project Team held a celebration and tour of biotechnical construction practices on October 30, in Alameda County. The collaboration is a \$600,000 streambank stabilization and restoration project, with \$200,000 from the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). The celebration marked completion of work considered central to success of the entire watershed plan. Arroyo de la Laguna is the main tributary to Alameda Creek which is the second largest tributary to the San Francisco Bay.

Upstream development and other factors, including the channel's natural characteristics have caused severe instability in the lower 5 miles of the Arroyo de la Laguna. Peak storm events also resulted in streambank erosion, loss of mature native trees, arroyo channel widening and increased sedimentation of Alameda Creek and San Francisco Bay.

Rapid erosion adversely affected wildlife habitat on-site plus upstream and downstream. High sediment loads and the lack of vegetation on streambanks severely modified stream hydrology.

This multi-partner restoration project along a 1,000-foot section of Arroyo de la Laguna between Pleasanton and Sunol, now controls stream flow with a variety of relatively low-cost biotechnical and bioengineered practices. These practices help prevent erosion, reduce sedimentation,



Tour participants view stream restoration practices including: bank shaping, planting, rock barbs, vegetated barbs, pin dikes, rootwads and Christmas tree revetments. *Photo: Jeff Raifsnider* 

establish streambank vegetation, improve wildlife habitat and will encourage natural creation of vegetated terraces along bank toes, increasing stability during moderate storm events. Arroyo de la Laguna's channel drains approximately 400 square miles of Alameda Creek watershed in the Tri-Valley region, and provides habitat for the California redlegged frog, the Western pond turtle, and many other native wildlife species in the county.

The project was managed by the Alameda County RCD and the NRCS. Funding partners include the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (landowner and WHIP cooperator), NRCS, Dublin-San Ramon Services District, County of Alameda Public Works, Zone 7 Water Agency, and Alameda County Water District.

### NRCS Speaks About Erosion Control At Viticulture Association Tour

#### By Jim Kjelgaard, Ag Engineer/Half Moon Bay

he Capitola and Half Moon Bay Local Partnership Offices, Clos De La Tech Vineyard, and The Viticulture Association of Santa Cruz Mountains hosted a vineyard tour and wine tasting at the Clos De La Tech Vineyard on September 14. More than 90 participants learned about the numerous conservation and cultivation techniques used on a site reputed to be "California's steepest vineyard."

Santa Cruz County DC **Rich Casale** and San Mateo County DC **Jim Howard** led a presentation and discussion of a variety of soil erosion and water management practices utilized by Clos De La Tech. Topics included proper roadway construction and orientation to avoid concentration of water flow, use of cover crops and vegetation to protect soils, practices to prevent slope destabilization, among others.

Casale spoke about planning for steep topography and using vegetated practices instead of structural erosion control practices where possible, and about performing regular maintenance of installed practices.

Vineyard manager **Rex Geitner** provided an enthusiastic endorsement of the technical services available through NRCS, Resource Conservation Districts, and UC Cooperative Extension. Prior to joining Clos De La Tech, Rex worked in Napa County and worked with Napa County District Conservationist **Phill Blake** on numerous vineyard conservation projects.

He clearly expressed his appreciation of the conservation knowledge and expertise provided by NRCS and other partners to the audience of vineyard and winery owners, managers, and vineyard consultants.



Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D Coordinator Robyn Smith (left) is honored by Pacific Rim Association President Bob Jones for organizing this year's Association meeting. Photo: Brian Ziegler

### **RC&D Focus: Forest** Health, Ag-Tourism

Pacific Rim Association Resource Conservation & Development Councils held its annual meeting November 7-9, at Tenaya Lodge in Fish Camp, Calif.

Highlights of the conference included programs focusing on growth issues affecting natural resources and rural communities. Keynotespeakers included Assemblyman Dave R-Modesto, Cogdill,

talked about natural resource and biomass challenges, and Bob Pickard, president of the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development



Photo: Dan Macon

A FRESNO FIRST - Area Engineer Dave Krietemeyer inspects the first synthetically lined dairy sewage lagoon installed in Fresno County. The lagoon, built with Environmental Quality Incentives Program funds, is a football field in size across and can hold 1.7 million cubic feet of effluent. Such lagoons are excellent for preventing nitrates from seeping into groundwater. Photo: Brian Ziegler



Council, who offered his thoughts on caring for both people and land.

Attendees were treated to two educational project tours which highlighted local efforts to promote agriculture tourism in Mariposa County and fire safety efforts in eastern Madera County.

**Participants** were also offered a variety of training, including marketing, working with Tribes, and contract

> The High Sierra RC&D co-sponsored the first annual Small **Progress** Days in Grass Valley. More than 300 farmers saw the latest in horsedrawn and tractor-drawn farm and logging equipment.

#### **Tahoe Soil Survey Complete**

t took nine years, but an updated survey of the soil found in the Lake Tahoe basin is now complete. South Lake Tahoe Soil Scientist **Woody Loftis** says the survey is available online.

"Currently you can access the maps and data, and the manuscript will be available soon." The survey can be used to see which parcels are most suitable for development.

To view it, visit http://websoilsurvey. nrcs.usda.gov/app/.



SURJIT S. TOOR, 50, Elk Grove District Conservationist, passed away from cancer on September 23, 2006.

Toor was born on Aug. 11, 1956, in Vill-Iaffal Jhinger Punjab, India. He became a U.S. citizen in Dec. 1980, and



Surjit S. Toor

graduated from California State University, Chico the following year with a degree in Ag Business.

Toor was first hired by the Soil Conservation Service in 1982 to work as a soil conservation technician in Redlands, Calif.

In 1984, he became a soil conservationist and was reassigned to Yuba City. He was promoted to district conservationist in Elk Grove in 1999.

"He was a great addition to the Area 3 family and to the agency," says office manager Lori Perez. "His dedication to his work continued even throughout his illness."

Photo: Bob Nichols



Soil Scientist Woody Loftis pauses from his work surveying soil in the Lake Tahoe basin. Photo: Hugh Safford

#### **Living With The Trees**

Dea and Rob Early have built their dream home, in San Bernardino's unincorporated mountain community of Sugarloaf, with nearly all recycled materials. This mountain home boasts a collage of striking elements, born of Dea Early's artful imagination and conservation ethic, which she attributes to being raised on a farm. From the moment one drives up to the Early house, it is clear that the family truly loves their home.

Log poles and an iron railing line the deck with a rustic portal, adorned with steel art depicting a moose in a mountain landscape, welcoming visitors up a flight of steps. A corner pole is left intact with branches, providing a natural landing for

Bark beet

local birds.
Natural wood
and earthy
tones define
the home's
e x t e r i o r,
making clear
the Early's

Bark beetle trails found on much of the wood in Dea's house. *Photo: Paul Laustsen*  appreciation for their place in the forest.

Amidst a major Emergency Watershed Protection project administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to remove dead and dying trees off of private lands in forested urban communities, the Earlys are a prime example of how resources can be utilized and given another life.

Being able to reuse resources is key for us," says Dea as she sits on her couch by the fireplace with a mantle made of a dead tree. "Why go out and use more resources when you don't need to?"

The windows, fixtures, and most other objects are all reclaimed or found from places like Habitat for Humanity's ReStores. For example, she picked up a huge skylight that opens by remote control for \$60.

Everywhere you look in Dea's home you'll find components that have lived another life, a trait she says she picked up in her childhood.

"On the farm, you work with what you have, what is available. I have brought that same philosophy to the rest of my life," says Dea.

Everything from the interior walls, to the stairs, to the kitchen counter is made from dead trees removed from or around



Adding found pieces of wood, Dea spruces up existing cabinetry. *Photo: Paul Laustsen* 

the Early's property. Bark beetle tracks are still evident in much of the wood, adding to the visual uniqueness of the material.

Dea has held several positions in the field of design, including a nuclear museum display designer in Knoxville, Tenn. Dea currently works as a ceramics and pottery instructor at San Bernardino Valley College.

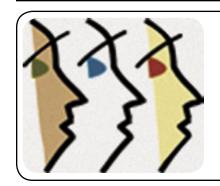
### Workshop Improves Conservation

ver a year ago, Blythe Field Office District Conservationist Steve Hill organized a conservation tillage workshop. He was pleased to see that 35 people attended this event, and that he received two conservation tillage EQIP applications. In the next EQIP sign-up period a year later, the office received five more applications. To date, almost 1,500 acres are under contract and 2,600 acres are estimated for 2007. This amount, actually high for the Blythe area, represents about 10 percent of the cotton acreage. You could say the farmers of the Palo Verde Valley were ready for this practice, that improves soil and air quality, reduces energy costs, and saves time. It all began when the Palo Valley RCD board expressed an interest in offering this type of information to farmers. Hill soon discovered that a partnership existed between NRCS and

UC Extension, which offered Conservation Tillage Workshops. He worked with Conservation Tillage Workgroup Chair Dr. Jeff Mitchell to design a workshop appropriate for area farmers. The 8-hour workshop included a discussion panel and field tour. The panel was made up of research and extension scientists, NRCS Air Quality specialist John Beyer, and several farmers practicing various forms of conservation tillage. According to farmer interviews, interest for Conservation Tillage stems from reducing equipment costs (especially fuel), preserving soil quality, and reducing labor costs. More information on the Conservation Tillage Workgroup can be found at http://groups.ucanr.org/ucct/index.cfm.

#### **Our Worst Weeds**

The Southern Low Desert Resource Conservation & Development Council (SLR RC&D) played front and center in an effort that aims to rid the eastern portion of Southern California Desert of noxious weeds. In November 2005, SLR RC&D developed and signed an MOU with over 20 stakeholders, including California Department of Food and Agriculture, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and NRCS to form the Low Desert Weed Management Area (LD WMA). The LD WMA has received nearly \$10,000 in grants to fund planning activities and the publishing cost of a noxious weed brochure. To assist with the multi-agency planning effort, Ray Ledgerwood of Board Works by Ledgerwood, worked with the various agencies and groups to develop a strategic plan, and structure for achieving their goals for 2007. The WMA has submitted its first major grant application, to the tune of \$100,000, to remove Tamarix. The brochure "Low Desert Weed Management Area - Our Worst Weeds" highlights 14 of the most invasive weeds in the area. For more information on the LD WMA or other SLD RC&D projects, contact Sam Cobb at sam.cobb@ca.usda.gov.



## Civil Rights Corner

**By Tanya Robles** Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager

alifornia NRCS' student recruitment season kicked off at Cal Poly Pomona as the university held its annual Federal Government Career Fair on November 16. The fair was attended by California Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) members and NRCS staff. **Cindy Montepagano**, California Civil Rights Advisory Committee Chair, **Tanya Robles**, Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, and **Rudy Perez**, Public Affairs Specialist, attended the career fair to encourage diverse students to apply to our the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

Over 60 eager Cal Poly students visited the booth to learn about NRCS. Attendance at this career fair was productive as several resumes were received and at least 20 eligible students signed up to learn more about student programs.

Cindy returned to Cal Poly Pomona the next week to talk to a classroom full of agronomy and agriculture students about NRCS. As a result, Cal Poly staff invited Cindy to visit local high schools to further promote the Agency and our student internships.

Participation in the 2006 Hispanic Heritage Month observance events extraordinary! Earlier in the year Jim Cairns, Public Affairs Specialist, won the national NRCS Hispanic Heritage Month poster contest. His poster design was displayed at NRCS offices nationwide, including our State Office and at all Hispanic Heritage Month festivities during the month of October.

This year's observance included workshops designed to equip employees with the tools to seek promotions and careers in management. These career enhancement workshops were offered to USDA employees in Fresno and Davis.

Over 85 USDA employees took advantage of this great



NRCSers (left to right) Tanya Robles, Cindy Montepagano and Rudy Perez at Cal Poly Pomona.



STC Ed Burton (left) and Jim Cairns, NRCS Hispanic Heritage Month poster contest winner for 2006. *Photo: Jen DeLorenzi* 

opportunity! **Ed Burton**, Sate Conservationist, fully supported future workshops, and they are being considered.



Name	Position	Action	Grade	Location	Date
Troy Jonas	SCT	Conv to CC	GS-6	Somis	08/06/06
Beau Schoch	Ag Engr	Conv to CC	GS-11	Salinas	08/06/06
Jake Snieder	Soil Scntst	Conv to CC	GS-7	Victorville	08/06/06
Edwin Martinez	Soil Consvst	Conv to CC	GS-7	Tulelake	08/20/06
Nick Lasher	Hydrologist	Conv to CC	GS-11	Salinas	10/01/06
Robert Neilsen	Ag Engr	CC Appt	GS-11	Visalia	09/03/06
Jason Linderman	Range Consvst	Term Appt	GS-5	Jackson	08/06/06
John Hunt	Wldlf Bio	Term Appt	GS-7	Oroville	08/06/06
Curtis Lewis	HR Asst	Term Appt	GS-7	Davis	09/17/06
Kathryn Bergman	Ag Engr	Term Appt	GS-11	Livermore	09/17/06
Erin Foreman	Soil Consvst	Term Appt	GS-7	Grass Valley	09/17/06
Adam Lerner	Forester	Conv to Term Appt	GS-11	Running Springs	09/03/06
Morpheus Anima	SCT	Conv to Term Appt	GS-7	Livermore	09/03/06
Steve Wilkins	Soil Consvst	Conv to Term Appt	GS-9	Willows	09/03/06
Susan Perez	Soil Const	Conv to Term Appt	GS-9	Merced	10/01/06
Stacy Kavanaught	Soil Scntst	New Hire CIP	GS-7	Sonora	08/20/06
DeDe Levine	Soil Consvst	Reassign from Yuba City	GS-11	Davis	08/20/06
Matt McNicol	Forester	Reassign from EWP	GS-11	Mariposa	09/03/06
Hue Dang	DC	Reassign from Oroville	GS-12	Placerville	09/17/06
Nathan Key	DC	Reassign from Colusa	GS-11	Oroville	10/15/06
Heather Wood	Soil Consvst	Promo	GS-7	Yreka	08/20/06
John Kelley	Ag Engr	Promo from Bishop	GS-11	Indio	08/20/06
Corinne Brooks	Soil Consvst	Promo from NM	GS-12	Salinas	09/03/06
Kendra Moseley	Range Consvst	Promo	GS-11	Davis	09/03/06
Kristen Flynn	Range Consvst	Promo	GS-11	Petaluma	09/17/06
Jessica Groves	Wtlnds Bio	Promo from OR	GS-12	Davis	10/01/06
Jeff Hansen	Range Consvst	Promo from OCIO	GS-12	Fresno	10/15/06
Daniel Mountjoy	ASTC-FO	Promo	GS-14	Salinas	11/26/06
Paul Schmidt	Adm Asst	Transfer from VA	GS-7	Davis	08/20/06